



Courtesy photo

beast by Chris Powell (1999-2001)

QUICK SKETCH

Chris Powell at UD

WHAT: "animalia," new works by Chris Powell at University of Dallas' Haggerty Gallery.

BACKGROUND: Mr. Powell of Fort Worth first earned notice in the area in the mid-1980s for his oddly abstract stone and clay sculpture, which alluded to living figures.

Since then, the Arkansas native has played with our notions of what is natural and what is manufactured with rich, weighty totemic objects in various media. He carves stone, fires ceramics, slathers plaster and pounds metal into stylized beings that demand respect.

A Texas Christian University art faculty member since 1989, Mr. Powell hasn't shown much of his work in the area of late.

HOW IT LOOKS: Almost all of the 19 works depict domesticated animals; in that spirit, the installation in Haggerty Gallery's rectangular space resembles a sterile barnyard.

The scene is dominated by *bull*, a life-size, smoothed-out plaster replica of a water buffalo. Six feet high and about 9 feet long, *bull* is an imposing presence that suggests he's the ruler of the room, though his elegantly polished hoofless legs and droopy, drugged facial expression hint

otherwise. The sculpture exemplifies Mr. Powell's aims — to raise questions on our attitudes about familiar forms and to play with the domination of surrounding space. It's so big and solid, yet confined and delicately perched — surely it deserves to be more "in the open."

Other works play other tricks. The nutria-like stoneware *zipper* peers down the wall that it seems to have scaled. Two miniature ceramic dogs, *buster* and *orville*, stand ready to yip-yap at the shoelaces of gallerygoers.

Mr. Powell also tips his hat to other artistic modes. A series of plywood-and-plaster pieces combines Bauhaus-strict furniture design with sensuous animal curves. The wide-eyed, primitive heads on works such as *lamb on a stick* and *beasts of the field and birds of the air* mimic American Indian and Aegean idol carving.

DETAILS: On display through May 23 at the gallery, inside Haggerty Arts Village on the University of Dallas campus, 1845 E. Northgate, Irving. Hours: Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday noon to 5 p.m. Free. 972-721-5087.

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